

Anticipatory Global Governance: International Organisations and Political Futures

Call for Papers for the 6th European Workshops in International Studies (EWIS)
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Convenors

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Scholarship on international organisations (IOs) has grown and diversified in recent decades. Yet most IO studies take a retrospective analytical perspective. For example, principal-agent accounts provide detailed insights into the conditions under which IO bureaucrats escaped state control to pursue their own agendas. Constructivist accounts show how IO bureaucrats recast the belief systems of state actors, changing the preferences of the latter and promoting new governance norms. While such contributions illuminate how IOs' past activities produced certain political presents, there is an urgent need for more forward-looking research.

To address this issue, this workshop develops and empirically explores the concept of 'anticipatory global governance' in the context of IO operations. In doing so, it draws on two established research traditions. First, constructivist and performative perspectives in a number of fields of study (including political science, organisational sociology and science & technology studies) assume that no future is inevitable or 'natural'. Political futures are created and continuously enacted through both human and non-human agents, including the activities of IO staff and their governance technologies. Second, the rapidly expanding global governance literature on quantification, specifically on indicators and benchmarks as governance tools, provides a starting point for a more future-oriented analysis of IO operations. In this sense, IOs directly partake in negotiations over political futures by crafting a range of instruments to make the future knowable and, thus, amenable to purposive interventions.

The workshop builds on these traditions by clarifying how anticipatory global governance works and what roles IOs assume in it. Specifically, we wish to engage three broader sets of questions:

- What are the *institutional functions* of anticipatory global governance by IOs?
 - Why do IOs develop certain anticipatory practices and utilise certain instruments (agenda-setting, problematisation, justification, legitimation, etc.)?
 - To what extent are these practices and instruments responses to internal imperatives or external pressures?

- What are the *organisational dynamics* of anticipatory global governance by IOs?
 - How do IOs make the future (or futures) knowable and governable? Which futures are deemed unknowable and ungovernable, and why?
 - How do specific practices and instruments create empirical evidence about or imaginations of potential futures?
- What are the *political effects* of anticipatory global governance by IOs?
 - How does anticipatory global governance shift political discourses, as well as affect domestic and transnational policymaking?
 - To what extent does anticipatory governance entail shifts in power relations and authority?

Authors should outline how their paper addresses (some of) these questions. They can examine various IOs, diverse transnational issue areas and various types of instruments, including estimates, simulations, scenarios ('war games'), big data and algorithms. For purposes of comparability, however, they should focus on intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), not non-governmental organisations (NGOs). We are especially interested in contributions that investigate lesser-known IOs and thus extend beyond the 'usual suspects'.

The workshop is intended to yield a special issue in a suitable peer-reviewed journal. Participants should therefore be willing to contribute their paper to such a submission.